

CLAIMS

- 1 1. A group-based search engine for locating web pages, comprising:
2 a system for associating a user group with a web search; and
3 a search system for generating a list of search results ordered by a ranking in
4 response to the web search, wherein the ranking is based on at least one nomination
5 previously made by a member of the user group.
- 1 2. The group-based search engine of claim 1, further comprising a system for logging in
2 as a member of the user group.
- 1 3. The group-based search engine of claim 2, further comprising a system for nominating
2 a selected web page.
- 1 4. The group-based search engine of claim 3, wherein the nominating system causes the
2 selected web page to have an increased priority in the ranking of future search results.
- 1 5. The group-based search engine of claim 3, wherein the nominating system causes the
2 selected web page to be excluded from future search results.

1 6. The group-based search engine of claim 3, wherein the nominating system causes the
2 selected web page to be listed in future search results for logged-in user group members
3 only.

1 7. The group-based search engine of claim 1, further comprising a system for
2 highlighting search results in the list that point to web pages recently visited by other user
3 group members.

1 8. The group-based search engine of claim 2, further comprising a system for un-
2 nominating a selected web page.

1 9. The group-based search engine of claim 1, further comprising a system for creating a
2 new user group.

1 10. The group-based search engine of claim 1, further comprising a system for adding
2 new members to the user group.

1 11. A program product stored on a recordable medium for interfacing with a search
2 engine to return a list of search results, comprising:
3 means for registering with a group;
4 means for submitting a search string to the search engine;
5 means for viewing the list of search results based on a ranking, wherein any
6 search result previously nominated by a group member as a high priority is ranked above
7 un-nominated search results; and
8 means for nominating a current search result from the list of search results.

1 12. The program product of claim 11, wherein said means for nominating a current
2 search result includes means for nominating the search result as a high priority.

1 13. The program product of claim 11, wherein said means for nominating a current
2 search result includes means for excluding the current search result from a future list of
3 search results.

1 14. The program product of claim 11, wherein said means for nominating a current
2 search result includes means for identifying the current search result as available only to
3 members of the group.

1 15. The program product of claim 11, further comprising means for interfacing with a
2 plurality of search engines using a common set of group data, wherein the common set of
3 group data includes registration and nomination information for the group.

1 16. The program product of claim 11, wherein the means for submitting a search string
2 includes means for associating the search string with the group.

1 17. The program product of claim 11, wherein the means for viewing the list of search
2 results includes means for viewing a highlighted search result, wherein the highlighted
3 search result identifies a web page previously visited by a member of the group.

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1 18. A search system for performing group-based searches, comprising:

2 a client system having a browser and a search engine plug-in, wherein the search
3 engine plug-in allows group members to generate nomination data by nominating web
4 pages; and

5 a server having a control program and a group structure for storing nomination
6 data, wherein the control program generates a primary search result list based on a search
7 index, and further refines the search result list based on the stored nomination data.

1 19. The search system of claim 18, wherein the plug-in causes a nominate button to be
2 displayed with each web page displayed by the browser.

1 20. The search system of claim 18, wherein the nomination data includes selected web
2 pages nominated as having a higher priority, and the control program refines the search
3 result list by listing the selected web pages first.

1 21. The search system of claim 18, wherein the nomination data includes selected web
2 pages nominated as excluded, and the control program refines the search result list by not
3 listing the selected web pages.

1 22. The search system of claim 18, wherein the nomination data includes selected web
2 pages nominated as private, and the control program refines the search result list by not
3 listing the selected web pages for non-members.

1 23. The search system of claim 18, wherein the group structure further includes visitation
2 data regarding which web pages group members visited.

1 24. The search system of claim 23, wherein the control program causes a result in the
2 primary search result list to be highlighted based on the visitation data.

1 25. A method for performing a group-based search, comprising:
2 providing a browser and a search engine plug-in on a client system;
3 logging in as a member of a group using the browser;
4 submitting a search request to a search engine server;
5 searching a search index and returning a primary search result list; and
6 refining the primary search result list based on nomination data collected from
7 members of the group.

1 26. The method of claim 25, further comprising:
2 nominating a web page at the client system;
3 transmitting nomination data to the search engine server; and
4 storing the nomination data in a group structure.

1 27. The method of claim 26, wherein nominating the web page includes indicating a
2 higher priority for the web page and wherein refining the primary search result list
3 includes listing the nominated web page with a higher priority.

1 28. The method of claim 26, wherein nominating the web page includes indicating the
2 web page as excluded, and wherein refining the primary search result list includes
3 excluding the web page from the primary search result list.

1 29. The method of claim 26, wherein nominating the web page includes indicating the
2 web page as private, and wherein refining the primary search result list includes
3 excluding the web page from the primary search result list for non-members.

1 30. The method of claim 25, further comprising the further steps of:
2 tracking web pages visited by group members; and
3 wherein the step of refining the primary search result list includes highlighting
4 visited web pages.